(d) A technical committee was constituted by the Government in June, 2000, which concluded that there was a need to set up a world class R&D laboratory in collaboration with MIT Media Lab, as it has an established brand name. It was felt that such a lab would serve the interest of India and Asia by leveraging technology for the service of the common man. Subsequently, a Joint India-MIT Task Force was set up in November, 2000. The Task Force recommended immediate setting up of Media Lab Asia.

(e) Does not arise.

(f) No, Sir.

(g) Does not arise.

(h) The Government has approved the full scope programme of restructured Media Lab Asia for a period of nine years with effect from May, 2003.

Media Lab has identified the following key research initiatives:

* Bits for all: to provide law cost, high bandwidth wireless connectivity.
* World Computer: to develop affordable computing and communication access devices.
* Tomorrow's Tools: to develop sensors and interfaces for rural applications.

Research laboratories at five IITs, namely, Delhi, Mumbai, Kanpur, Chennai and Kharagpur have taken up several projects in these thrust areas. Pilot deployment has been carried out for some of the projects. Notable among these are: deployment of multi hop wireless network to provide rural connectivity, development of innovative vehicle mounted access points to wireless network, Linux based geographical information system for handheld computers and research on low cost testing tools for deployment in the rural environment.

Media Lab Asia programme

1190. SHRI A. VIJAYARAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Media Lab Asia programme, a collaborative venture with the US based MIT was called off in May, 2003;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor including the source and reasons for initiating the above project;

(c) whether the above project was pushed ignoring the issues raised in Rajaraman Committee appointed to look into the feasibility of establishing the Media Lab Asia;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) whether any inquiry would be initiated on the formation and conduct of the project Media Lab Asia and the collaborative programme with the MIT?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI SU. THIRUNAVUKKARASAR): (a) The collaboration between the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA and Media Lab Asia was not continued beyound March 31, 2003. A re-structured Media Lab Asia programme has since been approved by the Government.

(b) Collaboration with US based MIT was not continued because it was felt, based on an internal review, that project based collaborations with different institutions having relevant experience would better suite the objectives of the programme.

The project was initiated in view of the recommendation of a technical committee under the chairmanship of Prof. Rajaraman for setting up a world class R & D lab. Thereafter, a Joint Task Force comprising representatives of the Indian Government and MIT, USA recommended immediate setting up of Media Lab Asia.

(c) and (e) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

Development of software for transliterating from Persian to Gurmukhi

1191. SHRI KARTAR SINGH DUGGAL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether he deserves to be complimented for producing software; and